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Perspective

Sustainable Practices for Water Management and Combating Pollution in Aquaculture

Jakub Thoshiyama*

Department of Aquatic Biosciences, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, Tokyo, Japan

DESCRIPTION

Aquaculture plays an important role in meeting global food demands. As fish and other aquatic organisms are cultivated in controlled environments, maintaining optimal water quality becomes a key factor in ensuring their health, growth and overall productivity. Poor water quality can negatively impact aquaculture operations by increasing stress levels, reducing immune response and promoting disease outbreaks among aquatic species. Thus, implementing effective strategies to improve rearing water quality is essential for the sustainability of aquaculture systems.

Rearing water quality involves a combination of physical, chemical and biological factors that influence the health of aquatic species. Among these, temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate concentrations are the most significant parameters. Each species has specific tolerance levels for these factors and deviations from the optimal range can lead to adverse effects. The water temperature directly affects the metabolism, growth and reproduction of aquatic species. It is important to maintain stable temperatures within species-specific ranges to prevent stress and ensure proper physiological functioning. Adequate oxygen levels are vital for the survival of aquatic organisms. Low dissolved oxygen levels can cause suffocation and increase susceptibility to diseases. Maintaining a balanced pH level is important as extreme acidity or alkalinity can harm aquatic life. A pH range of 6.5 to 8.5 is generally recommended for most species. These nitrogenous compounds are byproducts of fish excretion and decomposition of organic matter. High concentrations of ammonia and nitrites are toxic, while elevated nitrates can cause long-term health issues. Proper management of these compounds is necessary to prevent adverse effects. High turbidity levels can block light penetration, hinder photosynthesis and affect aquatic plants and algae, which are crucial components of the ecosystem. Water quality in aquaculture systems can deteriorate due to multiple factors. These include overstocking, improper feeding practices, accumulation of waste materials and inadequate water circulation. Additionally, environmental pollution from agricultural runoff and industrial effluents can introduce harmful substances such as pesticides, heavy metals and pathogens into aquaculture systems. Identifying these sources and addressing them is essential for maintaining optimal water conditions.

Filtration systems are critical for removing physical impurities and organic debris from aquaculture water. Mechanical filters remove suspended particles, while biological filters support beneficial bacteria that convert toxic ammonia into less harmful nitrates through the nitrification process. Advanced filtration systems, such as sand filters and bead filters, can further improve water clarity. Maintaining proper dissolved oxygen levels is essential for aquatic organisms. Aerators and oxygen diffusers enhance oxygen exchange in water, particularly in high-density aquaculture systems. Surface aerators, paddlewheel aerators and venturi injectors are commonly used to improve oxygen levels. Biofiltration employs naturally occurring microorganisms to break down organic waste and nitrogenous compounds. By creating an environment that supports beneficial bacteria, biofilters reduce toxic substances and enhance water quality. Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) are closed-loop systems that continuously filter and recycle water within the aquaculture facility. These systems minimize water usage and maintain optimal water quality by integrating filtration, aeration and disinfection technologies. Certain chemical treatments can be used to control pH levels, neutralize toxins and disinfect water. However, the use of chemicals must be carefully regulated to avoid harming aquatic organisms or creating environmental hazards. Probiotics are beneficial microorganisms that help maintain a healthy microbial balance in aquaculture systems. They can suppress harmful bacteria, improve digestion in aquatic species and reduce the accumulation of organic waste. Constructed wetlands and vegetative buffers around aquaculture facilities can act as natural filters, absorbing excess nutrients and preventing contaminants from entering the water. These systems also promote biodiversity and ecological balance. Periodic water exchange dilutes harmful substances and replenishes essential

Correspondence to: Jakub Thoshiyama, Department of Aquatic Biosciences, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, Tokyo, Japan, E-mail: jakub@thoshiyama.jp

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nutrients. However, this method should be used judiciously to conserve water resources and avoid introducing external contaminants.

Consistent monitoring and timely management are crucial for maintaining optimal water quality. Using sensors and automated systems for real-time data collection can help identify changes in water parameters and allow for prompt corrective actions. Developing and adhering to Best Management Practices (BMPs) can further enhance water quality. Advancements in technology have revolutionized water quality management in aquaculture. Precision farming techniques, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), are being increasingly adopted to monitor and control water parameters. Automated systems equipped with sensors can measure temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen levels in real time, providing actionable insights. AI-based algorithms can predict water quality issues and suggest preventive measures, enabling proactive management. Nanotechnology has also emerged as a promising tool for water treatment. Nanoparticles and nanomaterials can effectively remove pollutants, neutralize toxins and disinfect water. These technologies are highly efficient and have minimal environmental impact, making them suitable for sustainable aquaculture practices.